

## **A Public Health Model for the Prevention of Violence Against Women**

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### **Primary Prevention – preventing violence before it occurs**

Primary prevention interventions are those that seek to prevent violence *before it occurs*. Interventions can be targeted to the whole population or to particular groups that may be at higher risk of being the perpetrators or victims of violence. Some primary prevention interventions (such as social marketing campaigns) focus on changing behaviour or building the knowledge and skills of individuals. However, primary prevention can also focus on changing environments so that they are safer for women. Interventions that do not have a particular focus on violence, but address its underlying causes (such as gender inequality and poverty), are also primary prevention interventions.

### **Early intervention – taking action on early signs of violence**

Early intervention is targeted to individuals and groups who exhibit *early signs* of perpetrating violent behaviour or of being subject to violence. They can be aimed at changing behaviours or increasing the skills of individuals and groups. Early intervention may also be targeted to environments in which there are strong signs that violence may occur or has begun to occur (eg subcultures, such as peer groups or sporting clubs in which there is a strong culture of disrespect of women).

### **Intervention – providing support and treatment to victims of violence and adopting measures to prevent re-offending and repeat victimization**

Intervention strategies are implemented *after* violence occurs. They aim to deal with the violence, prevent its consequences (such as mental health problems) and to ensure that violence does not occur again or escalate. Intervention includes things such as crisis accommodation and social support for victims of violence and criminal justice and therapeutic interventions for perpetrators.

It is not always possible to make a clear distinction between these strategies. For example a policy reform, such as a police code of practice mandating arrest of perpetrators of domestic violence, is clearly designed to facilitate intervention after violence has occurred. However it can also have a primary preventative effect (by communicating to the wider community that violence against women is a serious issue) and an impact on early intervention by deterring potential perpetrators.

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| Public Health Strategies                   | Primary Prevention                                                                                                                                                                       | Early intervention                                                                                                                                                                              | Intervention                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Research, monitoring and evaluation</b> | A study explores whether there is a relationship between gender related income inequality and the prevalence of domestic →                                                               | A long term study of young women at risk of domestic violence explores whether there is a link between unemployment and vulnerability to violence. →                                            | An intensive job search assistance program to survivors of domestic violence is evaluated to determine whether it reduces their risk of further victimisation.               |
| <b>Direct participation</b>                | A school based program is offered to young people exploring healthy and respectful relationships →                                                                                       | Following evidence of forced sexual contact, a school nurse delivers a program targeted to young women focussing on their right to respect in relationships. →                                  | A support group is established for young women who have been subject to sexual assault                                                                                       |
| <b>Organisational development</b>          | A sporting club develops policies and procedures to ensure female participants and spectators have equal access to club resources and facilities and a safe and welcoming environment. → | The club develops a training program for its coaches to assist them in identifying and responding to player behaviour which is disrespectful of women →                                         | The club introduces and enforces penalties for players found to vilify or harass women.                                                                                      |
| <b>Community strengthening</b>             | A local council works with its community to develop a women's safety strategy covering a range of council activities from land- use planning to community services →                     | Local men develop a mentoring program targeted to young boys who have been identified as behaving disrespectfully toward women and girls. →                                                     | The community attracts additional resources to provide emergency accommodation for local women and children fleeing family violence.                                         |
| <b>Communications and social marketing</b> | Radio and television advertisements are developed advocating respectful relationships between men and women →                                                                            | After incidents of sexual assault, including sexual harassment and date rape, come to light local clubs develop a campaign warning male patrons of the legal consequences of their behaviour. → | The campaign urges young women to contact the police if they are subject to sexual assault.                                                                                  |
| <b>Advocacy</b>                            | Women's groups lobby government to introduce a family violence policy asserting that this violence will be treated as any other criminal assault. →                                      | This includes lobbying for a police code of practice which seeks to deter domestic violence by mandating police to arrest perpetrators. →                                                       | Women's refuges meet with senior police to urge them to adopt measures to ensure that the code is enforced so that perpetrators of violence are removed from the family home |
| <b>Legislative and policy reform</b>       | Legislation is introduced making rape in marriage a crime. The law communicates a message to the community that violence against women is unacceptable regardless of the relationship →  | The legislation communicates to potential perpetrators that such behaviour is not acceptable and will be treated as would other violent crimes. →                                               | The legislation improves protection for victims of rape in marriage                                                                                                          |

*Developed by VicHealth, 2005*